

MASCULINITY,  
MILITARISM AND  
EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY  
CULTURE, 1689-1815

JULIA BANISTER

*Leeds Beckett University*



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*The Military Man and the Culture of Sensibility*  
*Smith, Ferguson, Mackenzie*

Mourn England, mourn in duller strain,  
 Your chiefest hero Wolfe is slain.  
 Adorn'd with every manly grace,  
 In heart and body, mind and face.  
 His virtue far and near was fam'd,  
 A better man no age has nam'd.<sup>1</sup>

The British victory at the battle for Quebec in 1759 was a turning point in the Seven Years' War. The early years of the war had been marked by failures for Britain, not least the loss of Minorca that had resulted in the execution of an admiral. General James Wolfe's victory in Quebec was the mirror image of this, for the commander perished in his quest to secure victory. Unlike the death of the inglorious Byng, the death of England's 'chiefest hero' was a desirable subject for the eighteenth-century's culture of sensibility. The eighteenth-century's interest in sensibility is usually said to have emerged early in the century, clearly so by the 1740s, and to have reached the peak of its popularity by the 1780s even though it remained a significant term in the Romantic period.<sup>2</sup> In essence, the turn to sensibility was a turn to feeling and thus to the body. As Graham J. Barker-Benfield discusses, the ability to feel was understood to be a feature of the physical body: to feel was to possess a nervous system which produced bodily effects – blushes, tears and swoons – in response to external stimuli.<sup>3</sup> And yet, initially at least, the turn to sensibility was not a turn away from

<sup>1</sup> 'Britain in Tears for the Loss of Brave General Wolfe', *The Muse's Delight: or, the Songster's Jovial Companion* (London: Pridden et al., 1760), pp. 125–6, ll. 5–10.

<sup>2</sup> Janet Todd, *Sensibility: An Introduction* (London: Methuen, 1986); *Passionate Encounters in a Time of Sensibility*, ed. by Maximillian E. Novak and Anne Mellor (London: Associated University Presses, 2000); Christopher Nagle, *Sexuality and the Culture of Sensibility in the British Romantic Era* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007).

<sup>3</sup> G. J. Barker-Benfield, *The Culture of Sensibility: Sex and Society in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), pp. 1–36.

politeness. Such was the physicality of sensibility, Paul Goring argues, that this 'bodily rhetoric' of feeling could lend weight to the new 'performance of modern politeness'.<sup>4</sup> Indeed, for Philip Carter, sensibility is 'best viewed less as a complete replacement for than as a significant reworking of existing definitions of male refinement, whereby the potential for polite artifice was reduced through an accentuated attachment to the value of genuine emotion.'<sup>5</sup> That said, by the mid-century, sensibility could be pulled in quite the opposite direction. Jerome McGann has traced how the culture of sensibility changed during the mid to late century and argues that the sentimental writing which became so dominant promoted 'at least the appearance of traditional hierarchies of thought (religious vs. secular) and social relations (male vs. female).'<sup>6</sup> Emphasizing Edmund Burke's sentimentality for 'the age of chivalry' at the time of the French Revolution, Claudia Johnson likewise argues that by the end of the century sensibility had become integral to a masculine political identity that sought to centralize conservative and traditional ideologies.<sup>7</sup>

Like the return to the gothic past, then, there can be no single narrative for the eighteenth-century culture of sensibility. The very capaciousness of the key term meant that it could as easily reinforce the virtue of polite performance as corroborate essentialist argument, for that which was part internal and part external could anchor that which was suspiciously superficial or make manifest that which was invisibly innate. Such expansiveness also accommodates tensions, and these tensions are particularly acute with regard to the military man. An ancillary to politeness, the new cult of feeling emerged, as Barker-Benfield argues, alongside efforts to reform the 'old style of man', in particular his fondness for antisocial violence, such as duelling.<sup>8</sup> However, even Carter acknowledges that sensibility began to move to a very different direction, as he detects a 'pronounced equation of sensibility and militarism evident from the late 1750s.'<sup>9</sup> Drawing on texts by Adam Smith, Adam Ferguson and Henry Mackenzie, produced between the late 1750s and the early 1770s, this chapter argues that the culture of sensibility was able to accommodate both the modern military man and

<sup>4</sup> Paul Goring, *The Rhetoric of Sensibility in Eighteenth-Century Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), p. ix.

<sup>5</sup> Carter, *Men and the Emergence of Polite Society*, p. 93.

<sup>6</sup> Jerome McGann, *The Poetics of Sensibility: A Revolution in Literary Style* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1996), p. 8.

<sup>7</sup> Claudia Johnson, *Equivocal Beings: Politics, Gender and Sentimentality in the 1790s*, Wollstonecraft, Radcliffe, Burney, Austen (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), pp. 34, 98.

<sup>8</sup> Barker-Benfield, *The Culture of Sensibility*, p. 86.

<sup>9</sup> Carter, *Men and the Emergence of Polite Society*, p. 108.

the 'natural' old hero. Whereas Smith's theorizing of moral sentiments employs the modern military man to help secure the virtue of modern performance, Ferguson and Mackenzie turn to the old hero, an honorific they extend to what the eighteenth century termed the 'savages' of North America and India, to highlight the social function of man's innate capacity for feeling. It is the appeal to the racialized 'other' that indicates how the military man was used within the culture of sensibility to centralize essentialist conceptualizations of gender.

### Sympathy, Sentiment and the Military Man

The first edition of Adam Smith's *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1759) appeared in print just a few months before General Wolfe secured the victory that, with the successes at Minden, Lagos and Quiberon Bay turned the tide of the Seven Years' War. Given that, two years earlier, the public outcry over the loss of Minorca had led to the execution of an admiral, it is significant that, following the publication of Smith's *Theory*, David Hume wrote to 'commiserate' with his close friend: 'I proceed to tell you the very melancholy News, that your Book has been very unfortunate. For the Public seem disposed to applaud it extremely. It was looked for by a mob of foolish People with some Impatience; and the Mob of Literati are already beginning to be very loud in its Praises.' With this, Hume differentiates between their circle and the 'Public', a category that includes the 'mob of literati' and, implicitly, Smith's publisher, for as Hume goes on to write, 'you see what a Son of the Earth that is, to value Books only by the profit they bring him.' Hume further characterizes their circle when he reveals that he has circulated a copy of the book to carefully vetted individuals including Horace Walpole and the then unknown author of what Hume thought to be a 'very pretty' treatise on the sublime, Edmund Burke.<sup>10</sup> As participants in a closed community of intellectuals, to which Burke is only peripheral, Hume and Smith sought to occupy a space within the bourgeois public sphere, an insular space, insulated from the public and its views and opinions.

If, after decades of debate concerning the 'Adam Smith Problem', it is now thought to be too simplistic to say that the author of *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* later turned suddenly and unaccountably into the prophet of laissez-faire capitalism, it might also be admitted that Smith's

<sup>10</sup> David Hume to Adam Smith, 12th April 1759, in *On Moral Sentiments: Contemporary Responses to Adam Smith*, ed. by John Reeder (Bristol: Thoemmes Press, 1997), pp. 6, 7, 3.

theorizing of the concept of sympathy is broadly committed to furthering the culture of politeness.<sup>11</sup> According to Smith's *Theory*, the word sympathy 'denote[s] our fellow-feeling with any passion whatever': it is the human response to others' emotional states, whether those states are genuine or produced, like those conjured by actors in theatrical productions.<sup>12</sup> The virtue of sympathy lies in the fact that it does not attempt to discriminate on the basis of others' sincerity, for the involuntariness of the response to others' emotions countersigns the sincerity of the individual's responses to all those with whom she or he interacts. Tellingly, given the importance of conversation as the primary arena for polite performance, Smith reflects on the telling of a joke to illustrate the way sympathy operates. An individual ought to laugh when a joke is told in a social situation, Smith argues, for if no-one laughs the teller of the joke feels foolish. With this, Smith's *Theory* turns the affectation of amusement, which would otherwise be a polite but also duplicitous response, into an act of sympathy.<sup>13</sup> As this example illustrates, Smith's notion of sympathy lends moral weight to polite behaviour. That said, Smith's attempt to substantiate politeness with spontaneous sensibility ultimately subordinates emotional involuntariness to polite self-management, for the individual, Smith states, must submit to the 'measures and rules by which esteem and approbation are naturally bestowed.'<sup>14</sup> Thus, if the hearers of the joke are duty bound to laugh so as to alleviate another's distress, the teller of the joke is equally duty bound not to venture an unfunny remark. Following Smith's *Theory*, then, the capacity for feeling creates a double responsibility: individuals must sympathize with others' passions, but they must also regulate themselves so that others need not sympathize with them.

Though Smith defines sympathy as 'fellow-feeling' in ways that respond to the criticism that politeness operates as a mere screen for selfishness and duplicity, this remains 'self-centred sympathy', as Ildiko Csengei describes it, for his *Theory* turns what could be understood to be 'natural' feeling into the exercise of self-discipline.<sup>15</sup> Rather than seek to stabilize polite

<sup>11</sup> See Istvan Hont and Michael Ignatieff, 'Needs and Justice in *The Wealth of Nations*', in *Wealth and Virtue*, pp. 1–45; Nicholas Phillipson, 'Adam Smith as Civic Moralist', in *Wealth and Virtue*, pp. 179–202; Emma Rothschild, *Economic Sentiments: Adam Smith, Condorcet, and the Enlightenment* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001). See also Janet Sorensen, *The Grammar of Empire in Eighteenth-Century British Writing* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 138–71.

<sup>12</sup> Adam Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (London: A. Millar; A. Kincaid and J. Bell, 1759), p. 6.

<sup>13</sup> Smith, *Moral Sentiments*, pp. 15–18.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 245.

<sup>15</sup> Ildiko Csengei, *Sympathy, Sensibility and the Literature of Feeling in the Eighteenth-Century* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), p. 53.

performance by centralizing the feeling body as the basis for politeness, Smith effectively reduces the capacity for spontaneous sympathy to one of the many 'duties of politeness, which are so easily observed, and which one can scarce have any serious motive to violate.'<sup>16</sup> After all, the individual must show sympathy to those who are in need of it, but the heavier duty is to manage him- or herself so as not to solicit or require that sympathy from others. The former is described as an exercise of the 'soft, the gentle and the amiable virtues', whereas the latter exhibits 'the great, the awful and respectable, the virtues of self-denial, of self-government, of that command of the passions which subjects all the movements of our nature to what our own dignity and honour, and the propriety of our own conduct require.'<sup>17</sup> In other words, Smith's enthusiasm for involuntary feeling only thinly disguises his greater investment in self-discipline. Of course, in asking individuals not to solicit others' sympathy, Smith allows the crowd of spectators the power to judge, if not to actually punish, and with this Smith seems to be aware that this discipline might be external in origin. Whereas Boswell was to find himself torn between self-discipline and discipline-from-an-external-source, Smith smooths over the tension by bringing the two together. The double-duty of sympathy requires the individual to anticipate the spectators' judgement and to internalize that judgement in the form of an impartial spectator who 'allows no word, no gesture, to escape' until it has been moderated.<sup>18</sup> By indicating that the individual must internalize a standard that originates outside of him- or herself, Smith's *Theory* moves further towards a Foucauldian understanding of performativity in which inscription from without creates the illusion of a soul within.

The argument that Smith's *Theory* reinforces the virtue of polite performance by turning the body's capacity for 'natural' emotional responses into the double-duty of self-discipline might seem to be far removed from any concern with militarism, but as Richard Sher claims, when it came to military matters 'Smith took his stand on the side of the moderns', that is, among those who supported the standing army.<sup>19</sup> Military men appear in Smith's *Theory* as exemplary modern performers of sympathy/discipline.

<sup>16</sup> Smith, *Moral Sentiments*, p. 277.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 41.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 43. This reading is supported by John Bender, *Imagining the Penitentiary: Fiction and the Architecture of the Mind in Eighteenth-Century England* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), pp. 201–30.

<sup>19</sup> Richard B. Sher, 'Adam Ferguson, Adam Smith, and the Problem of National Defence', in Adam Smith, ed. by Knud Haakonssen (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1998), p. 258. See also Hont and Ignatieff, 'Needs and Justice in *The Wealth of Nations*'.

This is not immediately apparent in Smith's comments on what was a recent military event:

There is many an honest Englishman, who in his private station would be more seriously disturbed by the loss of a guinea than by the national loss of Minorca, who yet, had it been in his power to defend that fortress, would have sacrificed his life a thousand times, rather than through his fault, have let it fall into the hands of the enemy.<sup>20</sup>

Here, Smith sounds rather like the civic social commentator John Brown. For Brown, the loss of Minorca had testified to the pernicious influence of fashionable manners on men's military spirit, particularly men in the higher ranks of society. Like Brown, Smith has little regard for 'the man of rank and distinction ... whose whole glory consists in the propriety of his ordinary behaviour ... To figure at a ball is his great triumph, and to succeed in an intrigue of gallantry, his highest exploit.'<sup>21</sup> The dissipated coxcomb 'may be willing to ... make a campaign when it happens to be the fashion', Smith observes, 'but he shudders with the horror at the thought of any situation that demands the continual and long exertion of patience, industry, fortitude, and application of thought.' Rather than censure all modern military men, though, Smith only takes against those men who reduce the performance of politeness – that which should be the 'virtue of the great' – to a hollow ritual, unsubstantiated by the discipline that produces sympathy.<sup>22</sup> Earlier on, Smith notes that the man who 'feels every defect in the highest ceremony of politeness, whether it be shewn to himself or any other person' deserves to be reprimanded.<sup>23</sup> Real politeness, Smith implies, is achieved only by submitting to the double-duty of sympathy, which is the same kind of submission that might lead a man to 'defend [a] fortress'. Rather than identify the military man as an alternative to the polite gentlemen, then, Smith indicates that the modern military man and the polite gentleman should share a similar disciplinary regime.

Although Smith's *Theory* does not explicitly address the standing or otherwise of the nation's military establishment, then, it is clear that Smith has little time for civic ideals. The modernity of Smith's position is apparent when, following in Steele's footsteps, he pauses to consider the nature of military courage:

<sup>20</sup> Smith, *Moral Sentiments*, p. 367.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 122.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 123, 120.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 89.

The soldier who throws away his life in order to defend that of his officer, would perhaps be but little affected by the death of that officer, if it should happen without any fault of his own, and a very small disaster which had befallen himself might excite a much more lively sorrow. But when he endeavours to act so as to deserve applause, and to make the impartial spectator enter into the principles of his conduct, he feels that to everybody but himself his own life is a trifle compared with that of his officer, and that when he sacrifices the one to the other, he acts quite properly and agreeably to what would be the natural apprehensions of every impartial bystander.<sup>24</sup>

Although Smith commends the soldier who gives his life for his superior officer, he makes it clear that the soldier's courageous self-sacrifice is not entirely 'natural': it is not innate or essential. The soldier 'throws away' his own life only in order to comply with the impartial spectator. In other words, he performs courage in return for silent applause. Smith goes on to repeat his argument against natural courage by discussing men in the higher ranks. The officer who exposes his life in order to make a territorial gain for the nation does so not because he little values his life, but because he imagines the benefit of the gain to the people he serves. Rather than act from instinct, he disciplines his own feelings so as to act in accordance with the impartial spectator. It is the self-discipline required for the double-duty of sympathy, rather than natural courage, that enables the soldier and the officer alike to perform as military men.

Just as Smith concurs with Steele in his account of military courage, so his analysis of the military character shares much with Hume. When Hume contrasts the soldier and the priest he finds that 'the same principle of moral causes fixes the character of different professions, ... and this difference is founded on circumstances whose operation is eternal and unalterable.'<sup>25</sup> The 'circumstances' that shape the soldier are those that are 'eternally' different from those that shape the priest, not least the requirement that the soldier risk his life, and thus the character that seems to be essential to each is really a result of custom rather than nature. Echoing Hume's line of argument, Smith argues that the military character, in particular what seems to be uncountable cheerfulness, is forged by the rigours of professional military service: "The ordinary situation ... of men of this profession, renders gaiety, and a degree of dissipation, so much

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., p. 366.

<sup>25</sup> Hume, 'Of National Characters', in *Hume: Political Essays*, p. 79.



their usual character; and custom has, in our imagination, so strongly connected this character with this state of life[,] that we are very apt to despise any man[,] whose peculiar humour or situation, renders him incapable of acquiring it.' There are subtle differences between Hume and Smith's approaches: whereas Hume argues that, because the soldier's business is the business of soldiering, the military character is 'eternally' different from that of the priest, Smith stresses the contingency of militarism by arguing that, 'a long peace [...] is apt to diminish the difference between the civil and the military character.'<sup>26</sup> And yet, with this Smith's *Theory* equally emphasizes that the military character is merely circumstantial rather than corporeal.

When military men appear in Smith's *Theory*, then, they are championed only as thoroughly modern figures who have nothing of the old hero in them. According to Smith, it is the hero, rather than the polite gentleman, who is obviously and dangerously invested in promoting his own interests. For Smith, 'ambition' is,

a passion, which when it keeps within the bounds of prudence and justice, is always admired in the world, and has even sometimes a certain irregular greatness, which dazzles the imagination, [but] when it passes the limits of both these virtues, [it] is not only unjust but extravagant. Hence the general admiration for Heroes and Conquerors, and even Statesmen, whose projects have been very daring and extensive, tho' altogether devoid of justice.<sup>27</sup>

In Smith's view of things, 'Heroes and Conquerors', unrestrained by 'limits', are, like the gigantic knight of Walpole's imagination, 'unjust and extravagant'. When Smith asserts that 'perils and misfortunes are not only the proper school of heroism, they are the only proper theatre which can exhibit its virtue to advantage, and draw upon it the full applause of the world', he defines virtue as a kind heroism, not heroism as a kind of virtue. After all, the officer who, like the soldier, is able to put the nation's interests above his own deserves praise, not for his military skills, but for mustering such self-discipline that he is able to counteract his 'natural' instinct for self-preservation: 'in thus thwarting from a sense of duty and propriety, the strongest of all natural propensities, consists the heroism of his conduct.'<sup>28</sup> Smith repeats this point when he notes that 'a brave man exults in those dangers, in which, from no rashness of his own, his fortune has involved him', because 'one who is master of all his passions, does not

<sup>26</sup> Smith, *Moral Sentiments*, pp. 395–6.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 304–5.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 129, 367.

dread any circumstance in which the superintendent of the universe may think proper to place him.<sup>29</sup>

Taken together, Smith's observations on military courage, on the military character and on heroism suggest, not that a man is and ought to be capable of militarism, but that those who enter military life are shaped into military men by it. The inevitable conclusion is that the modern man might go to war, but he need not do so, for military service offers simply one arena in which a man might be able to display his mastery of himself. Given this, it is not surprising that Smith defends the view that politeness should bring about the feminization of masculinity. Smith encourages men to feminize their behaviour in mixed company: 'to talk to a woman as we should to a man is improper: ... their company should inspire us with more gaiety, more pleasantry, and more attention; and an intire insensibility to the fair sex, renders a man contemptible in some measure even to the men.'<sup>30</sup> As with Hume's essays, Smith's proto-constructionism reaches its limits when asked to account for the 'fair sex', but Smith's notion of gallantry makes the point that feminized behaviour in social spaces demonstrates self-control, and so although military service is one theatre in which self-discipline may be performed, it is by no means the most suitable for those with access to the polite world. It is the ordinary, 'private man', one who cannot achieve distinction through politeness, who 'looks forward with satisfaction to the prospect of foreign war, or civil dissension ... [and] sees through all the confusion and bloodshed which attend them ... [for] he may draw upon himself he attention and admiration of mankind.'<sup>31</sup> Ultimately, the military man may be capable of sympathy, as Smith understands it, but those capable of sympathy need not become military men. With this in mind, I want to compare the discussion of the modern military man in Smith's *Theory* with Adam Ferguson's appeal to old heroism in *An Essay on the History of Civil Society* (1767).

In comparison to Smith's *Theory*, Ferguson's *Essay* is not so obviously a significant contribution to the eighteenth-century culture of sensibility, but as an essay on the history of social organization, it was suited to its times. Whereas Smith published his *Theory* just a few months before a turning point in the war, Ferguson published his *Essay* four years after the end of the war, a period in which Britain was coming to terms with immense territorial gains that had

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., p. 133.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., pp. 52–3.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., pp. 121, 122.

considerably expanded Britain's horizons. Like many of his mid-century contemporaries, including Thomas Percy, Thomas Warton and Richard Hurd, Ferguson is concerned with the progress of human society from rudeness to civility, but whereas Percy, Warton and Hurd ultimately conclude that progress is synonymous with improvement, Ferguson takes issue with those who 'impute every advantage of our nature to those arts which we ourselves possess; and ... imagine, that a mere negation of all our virtues is a sufficient description of man in his original state.'<sup>32</sup> Ferguson's teleological account of the development of civil society is far from entirely hostile to modernity, particularly modern legal systems, but he does not consider progress to be a process which systematically replaces all that is imperfect because rude and old with all that is perfect because civilized and modern. As even-handed as the essay initially is about the advantages and disadvantages of both early and recent forms of human society, Ferguson ultimately forwards a thoroughly civic argument, one that looks back to the past in order to substantiate concerns about the present. Crucially, Ferguson strengthens his argument against unilinear progress by appealing to the timelessness of human nature. At the start of the essay, Ferguson considers the argument that mankind 'is in some measure the artificer of his own frame, as well as his fortune, and is destined, from the first age of his being, to invent and contrive.' Ferguson rejects this proto-constructionism on the basis that the capacity for 'invention' is innate and so the man who activates that capacity remains, fundamentally, the same.<sup>33</sup> And just as the capacity to invent is essential to human nature, so is the ability to feel. In the opening pages of the essay, Ferguson takes issue with the idea that in the 'state of nature' mankind exhibited a 'mere animal sensibility, without any exercise of the faculties that render them superior to brutes.' On the contrary, Ferguson argues, the ability 'to receive the informations of sense, is perhaps the earliest function of an animal combined with an intellectual nature.'<sup>34</sup>

To contrast Smith and Ferguson's essays is to see that Ferguson understands sensibility very differently. For Smith, to have feelings is to know that others have feelings, but this imposes the responsibility on individuals, the double-duty, to discipline their feelings in order to accept those who are unable to do likewise and, more importantly, to be acceptable to others. In Smith's account, the impartial spectator is a kind of mirror into

<sup>32</sup> Adam Ferguson, *An Essay on the History of Civil Society* (Dublin: Boulter Grierson, 1767), p. III.

<sup>33</sup> Ferguson, *Civil Society*, pp. 9, 12.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 2, 38.

which the individual can peer and with which make adjustments to his or her behaviour so as to only appear in public in his or her best form. In Smith's hands, sympathy does not create intimate bonds between individuals, for although Smith claims that feeling has a social function – to facilitate the 'harmony of society' – the idea that the individual must replace his or her feelings with those of the impartial spectator hardens the formality of polite interpersonal relationships and so isolates individuals.<sup>35</sup> For Ferguson, in contrast, to understand that others have feelings is to be naturally disposed to feel for and then to form affectionate bonds with them: 'man, in the perfection of his natural faculties is quick and delicate in his sensibility; extensive and various in his imaginations and reflections; attentive, penetrating, and subtle, in what relates to his fellow-creatures; firm and ardent in his purposes; devoted to friendship or to enmity; jealous of his independence and his honour.'<sup>36</sup> Although Ferguson uses the term 'sensibility' here, it is significant that he generally prefers the term 'sentiment' to describe the 'emotions that pertain to society' and which, as he puts it, the heart should feel as naturally as the eye sees light and the ear hears sound.<sup>37</sup> Unlike Smith, Ferguson worries about the decline of real fellowship in civilized societies where 'private interest, and animal pleasure, [have] become the sovereign objects of care', and where 'men ... bestow their attention on trifles ... [and what they] are pleased to call *sensibility* and *delicacy*'. In societies that 'make no trial of the virtues or talents of men', Ferguson warns:

We rate our fellow-citizens by the *figure* they are able to make; by their buildings, their dress, their equipage, and the train of their followers ... If the master himself is known to be a pageant in the midst of his fortune, we nevertheless pay our court to his station, and look up with an envious, servile, or dejected mind, to what is, in itself, scarcely fit to amuse children.<sup>38</sup>

Whereas Smith's double-duty of sympathy attempts to secure the virtue of polite sociability, Ferguson mounts an undisguised attack on what he calls the 'imbecility' of 'politeness', the pageantry of surfaces. Nothing, he reminds his readers, 'can turn the grimace of politeness into real sentiments of humanity and candour.'<sup>39</sup>

Ferguson's commitment to 'real sentiments' is reinforced by his comments on military matters. Some eight years previously, Ferguson had

<sup>35</sup> Smith, *Moral Sentiments*, p. 38.

<sup>36</sup> Ferguson, *Civil Society*, p. 167.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 5.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 385, 377.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 383, 58.

written a pamphlet that urged the nation's men to join the national militia, and the same civic impulses reappear in his *Essay*.<sup>40</sup> Like Trenchard and Brown, Ferguson is concerned with the growth of capitalism.<sup>41</sup> The first symptom of capitalism is the separation of work into professions which 'withdraw individuals from the common scene of occupation, on which the sentiments of the heart, and the mind, are most happily employed.'<sup>42</sup> The result of this is the decline of 'public spirit': 'we would have nations, like a company of merchants, think of nothing but the increase of their stock; assemble to deliberate on profit and loss; and, like them too, intrust their protection to a force which they do not possess in themselves.'<sup>43</sup> Echoing the anti-standing army argument, Ferguson reflects on the state of modern professionalized armies, peopled by men who serve for payment: 'A discipline is invented to inure the soldier to perform, from habit, and from the fear of punishment, those hazardous duties, which the love of the public, or national spirit, no longer inspire.'<sup>44</sup> Whereas Smith indicates that discipline creates, in every sense, the military man, Ferguson suggests that discipline is an inferior substitute for the emotions that first bonded people together and then motivated them to defend each other.

Ferguson's investment in 'real sentiments' is also an investment in real bodies. If love and compassion exist 'in the human breast', so the willingness to protect and preserve inheres within the body, and since military action is a consequence of the innate capacity to feel, both are necessarily 'natural'.<sup>45</sup> Indeed, Ferguson's argument that the feeling body precedes and prompts man's military actions leads him to argue that 'the frame of his nature requires him to be occupied'.<sup>46</sup> 'How many are there to whom war itself is a pastime, who chuse the life of a soldier, exposed to dangers and continued fatigues; of a mariner, in conflict with every hardship, and bereft of every conveniency', Ferguson muses. They do this, he asserts, because

MAN, it must be confessed, notwithstanding all th[e] activity of his mind, is an animal in the full extent of that designation. When the body sickens,

<sup>40</sup> Adam Ferguson, *Reflections Previous to the Establishment of a Militia* (London: R and J Dodsley, 1759). For Ferguson and the militia, see Robertson, *The Scottish Enlightenment*, pp. 200–9.

<sup>41</sup> Iain McDaniel, *Adam Ferguson in the Scottish Enlightenment: The Roman Past and Europe's Future* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013).

<sup>42</sup> Ferguson, *Civil Society*, p. 326. For Ferguson's opposition to commercial society, see Berry, *Social Theory of the Scottish Enlightenment*, pp. 132–49.

<sup>43</sup> Ferguson, *Civil Society*, p. 217.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 226.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 53.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 315.

the mind droops; and when the blood ceases to flow, the soul takes its departure. Charged with the care of his preservation, admonished by a sense of pleasure or pain, and guarded by an instinctive fear of death, nature has not intrusted his safety to the mere vigilance of his understanding, nor to the government of his uncertain reflections.<sup>47</sup>

Here, Ferguson seems to agree with Smith that men feel fear, but he then counters this by suggesting that the instinct for self-preservation, which is rooted in mere understanding and uncertain reflection, gives way to what is implicitly an equally natural capacity for action. For Ferguson, inactivity goes against men's innate, bodily nature such that 'in the absence of every manly occupation, [men] feel a dissatisfaction and languor which they cannot explain ... like the disquiet of sickness'.<sup>48</sup>

Like the anti-standing army authors, Ferguson's hostility to standing forces is motivated by his civic fear for the people's liberty. Just as sentiment for others precedes military action, so military action should be directed towards communal action: 'liberty is a right which every individual must be ready to vindicate for himself', he argues, but on the basis that, 'when a people is accustomed to arms, it is difficult for a part to subdue the whole.'<sup>49</sup> For Ferguson, militarism should be used against those who wish to govern in ways that 'deprive the citizen of occasions to act as the member of a public; that crush his spirit; that debase his sentiments, and disqualify his mind for affairs', that is, for the benefit of the public-at-large.<sup>50</sup> However, to argue that the male citizen should be motivated by his love for others to defend his and their liberties is merely to soften the civic instruction to men to exercise their military capacity. Ferguson's ideal man of feeling is, in effect, required to be a man of action and Ferguson holds up as exemplary the 'old men, among the courtiers of Attila, [who] wept, when they heard of heroic deeds, which they themselves could no longer perform'.<sup>51</sup> While Smith's *Theory* promotes self-discipline, which the modern man might perform in any number of arenas, Ferguson's *Essay* takes on a coercive function in promoting old heroism. It is the connection between sentiment and old heroism that I want to explore in more detail.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., pp. 65, 67.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., pp. 388–9.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., pp. 397, 404.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., p. 320.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., p. 157.

### Fellow-Feeling and the 'Warrior-Savage'

Shortly after the publication of Smith's *Theory of Moral Sentiments*, the news of the death of Wolfe at the conquest of Quebec arrived in England. The cost of the much-needed victory was to test the culture of sensibility, as the *Annual Register* records:

When the news of this decisive action arrived in England, we all remember, though it is very difficult to describe, the various and mixed emotions with which every one was affected ... the mixture of grief and pity, which attended the public congratulations and applauses, was very singular and affecting. The sort of mourning triumph, that manifest itself on that occasion, did equal honour to the memory of the general, and to the humanity of the nation.

The combination of a grand military success and a symbolically significant fatality produced an awkward confluence of emotions. For the editors of the *Register*, a 'mourning triumph' is still primarily a triumph, but they commend the neighbours of Wolfe's mother who forebore not to have any illuminations so as not to exacerbate her motherly grief: 'it shews a finesses of sentiment, and a justness of thinking, in the lower kind of people, that is rarely met with even amongst persons of education ... whoever knows the people, knows they made no small sacrifice on this occasion.'<sup>52</sup> With this, the *Register* recommends that the public manage its emotion in ways that accord with Smith's theory of the double-duty of sympathy. The *Register* permits the public to feel the loss of the general, but praises the respect shown towards one who was less able to manage her emotions. A similarly Smithean approach can also be seen in John Pringle's *The Life of General James Wolfe* (1760), the subtitle of which promises a biography written 'according to the rules of eloquence'. The author allows himself to be tossed from elation to despair: 'the Eye is seen to mourn; the Countenance in vain recalls its Sprightliness; nay, the whole Body, to shew its sympathies with the sincere Regret the Mind, would willingly clothe itself with a Garb of expressive sorrow!' However, this apex of sensibility is followed by a sudden narrowing of emotion: 'But cease ye unavailing Tears! ... Ye flow without reason.'<sup>53</sup> As he goes on to reason, there need only be so much

<sup>52</sup> *The Annual Register; or, A View of the History, Politicks and Literature of the Year 1759* (London: R. and J. Dodsley, 1762), p. 43.

<sup>53</sup> J[ohn] P[ring]le, *The Life of General James Wolfe, the Conqueror of Canada: or the Elogium of that Renowned Hero* (London: G. Kearsley, 1760), pp. 3-4.

lamentation for one who has been rewarded for his sacrifice with recognition for his merits and a place in heaven.

Pringle's flight into sensibility and abrupt return to reason and restraint can be contrasted with the poem 'Britain in Tears', as the latter's lachrymose refrain, 'Mourn England, mourn in duller strain,/ Your chiefest hero Wolfe is slain', works to steadily increase the pitch of emotion. This strategy can also be seen in one important artistic response to the battle: Benjamin West's *The Death of General Wolfe* (1770). As Alan McNairn argues, Wolfe was 'granted eternal fame as the embodiment of distinct British values' in no small part because his death proved to be a popular subject with painters.<sup>54</sup> George Romney and Edward Penny produced pictures of Wolfe in the early 1760s, but none were as successful as Benjamin West's *The Death of General Wolfe*, exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1771. West's painting was heavily reproduced in the 1770s and established a vocabulary for military scenes which West himself reused for *The Death of Nelson* (1806). According to David Solkin, West's *Wolfe* was successful because it modernized history painting, traditionally the highest genre of painting, to better suit polite tastes: 'in Benjamin West's hands', Solkin writes, 'the most public form of art became an instrument for the cultivation of those refined and sympathetic virtues which Hume and other mid-century Whiggish philosophers identified as the crowning glory of a prosperous commercial state.'<sup>55</sup> Myrone has argued that history painting fared badly in the eighteenth century, certainly in comparison to portraiture, but by presenting military men in modern clothing and by capturing specific individuals' likenesses, a key to which was published with a print of the painting in 1776, West's *Wolfe* showed that an 'exemplary her[o] could be made meaningful for the modern public' as an 'icon of modernized masculinity.'<sup>56</sup> Following Solkin and Myrone, then, it would be possible to suggest that West's *Wolfe* promotes Smithean sensibility. In fact, Penny's intimate painting, which imagines Wolfe accompanied with just two attendants and in a secluded clearing some way from the battle, is a better candidate for this. West's painting makes use of a grander scale and the epic scene that stretches away behind Wolfe is suited to one whose death commands attention. The crescent of

<sup>54</sup> Alain McNairn, *Behold the Hero: General Wolfe and the Arts in the Eighteenth Century* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1997), p. 6.

<sup>55</sup> David Solkin, *Painting for Money: The Visual Arts and the Public Sphere in Eighteenth-Century England* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1992), p. 188.

<sup>56</sup> Myrone, *Bodybuilding*, p. 120.



witnesses, including a grenadier on Wolfe's right, an American ranger in green, a tartan-clad Scots highlander and an American Indian ally, are not restrained Smithean spectators. Wolfe's brothers-in-arms surround him – the ranger and the Scotsman appear to have just rushed to Wolfe's side and the grenadier's hands are clasped as though in prayer – and the cordon of representative figures includes a space for the viewer of the painting, who is invited to complete the circle as a fellow mourner. In accepting that invitation, the viewer is positioned to experience his or her emotional response to the death of the hero, and also his or her fellowship with those who are experiencing the same feelings. With this, the painting creates a virtuous circle of mourning, within which emotion circulates, steadily increasing rather than diminishing. As a result, the painting of a dying hero both depicts and promotes the kind of socially orientated fellow-feeling that the civic-minded Ferguson identifies as essential to the ideal society.

With its use of modern clothing and contemporary figures, West's *Wolfe* testifies to the tendency, increasingly apparent from the mid-century, for the arguments that were earlier easily distinguishable, no more so than during the standing army debate, to strategically cannibalize each other's claims and thereby come to resemble each other. However, my reading of West's *Wolfe* as a civic attack on modernization and a celebration of old heroism takes particular note of the powerful presence of the American Indian ally. The dying Wolfe is closely flanked by three kneeling figures, but he gestures away from them and towards the American Indian, who stares intently at him. The pair is placed on the same horizontal plane and the positions of their bodies address each other, establishing a physical as well as emotional bond between them. The relationship depicted here reprises one created in West's earlier work, *General Johnson Saving a Wounded French Officer from the Tomahawk of a North American Indian* (1764–8). For Jonathan Conlin, West's *General Johnson* indicates that, by the mid-century, 'the hero had for the most part given way to the 'prudent man' of Smith's *Theory of Moral Sentiments*'.<sup>57</sup> True, the painting depicts a British officer rescuing his imperial enemy from 'savagery', but West undercuts this celebration of European hegemony by harmonizing the British officer and the America warrior; West has used a limited palate for both figures, including their skin tones: their healthy, earthy hues are set against the French officer's plaid skin and stark white clothing. While *General Johnson* ostensibly celebrates the commonality among

<sup>57</sup> Jonathan Conlin, 'Benjamin West's *General Johnson* and Representations of British Imperial Identity, 1759–1770', *British Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 27.1 (2004), 37–59 (at p. 54).

civilized nations, the composition and colouring create a counter-narrative which, as in *Wolfe*, connects the British officer to what was, certainly after the Seven Years' War, a culturally pervasive figure of 'otherness', and with this both paintings complicate any easy association between the racialized 'other' and savagery.<sup>58</sup> In *Wolfe*, the American Indian is equipped with his traditional weapons of war to mark him as a warrior, but the bond between him and Wolfe ensures that the general, and by extension all those who are dressed in modern military uniforms, are anchored to a figure who functions, like the civic citizen-soldier or gothic chivalric knight, as an icon of old heroism, and one who exceeds the citizen-soldier and knight in terms of overt physicality. The American Indian's muscular body evokes the classical bodies that, as Myrone has shown, were critical to the survival of heroic manliness in eighteenth-century art.<sup>59</sup> In fact, the American Indian's physical presence is so powerful in West's *Wolfe* as almost to displace its new old hero. Rather than mark the American Indian as lesser because 'other', his semi-naked body is physically superior to Wolfe's slender, limp form, and thus the dying soldier, who looks almost more like the ghostly French officer, is in danger of being 'othered' by his inferiority. West may be using the American Indian to secure Wolfe's old heroism, but by highlighting the former's super(latively)-natural body, West permits the viewer to breathe a quiet civic sigh for the eighteenth-century's version of the old hero.

The American Indian warrior has as significant a role in Smith's *Theory* and Ferguson's *Essay*, for both Smith and Ferguson ruminate upon 'warrior-savagery' in ways that reinforce their accounts of sensibility. For Smith, the warrior-savage is far from barbarous: though savage societies are violent societies, the conduct of the warrior-savage is proof of his capacity for rationality and self-control. Every 'savage', he argues, prepares 'from his earliest youth for the dreadful end' by preparing a song to sing should he be taken as a prisoner of war, and if condemned to torture he 'submits to the most dreadful torments, without ever bemoaning himself, or discovering any other passion but contempt of his enemies.'<sup>60</sup> Smith's account of the inhabitants of the uncivilized world, particularly

<sup>58</sup> For the eighteenth-century's public interest in the American Indian as a warrior, see Troy O. Bickham, *Savages Within the Empire: Representations of American Indians in the Eighteenth-Century* (Oxford: Clarendon, 2005).

<sup>59</sup> Myrone, *Bodybuilding*. Vivien Green Fryd notes that West's used classical models in order to construct the American Indian as an ideal masculine figure, but for Fryd the 'Native American symbolizes the masculinity of an alien culture' and so remains in a 'secondary position' to Wolfe. See 'Rereading the Indian in Benjamin West's "Death of General Wolfe"', *American Art* 9.1 (1995), 72–85 (at p. 84).

<sup>60</sup> Smith, *Moral Sentiments*, p. 401.

those of North America, goes so far as to state that 'their magnanimity and self-command ... are almost beyond the conception of Europeans.'<sup>61</sup> For Maureen Harkin, Smith's willingness to praise the warrior-savage is indicative of a broader ambivalence about enlightened modernity: 'in Smith's version of history ... the primitive and the modern compete for dominance, and the celebration of progress clashes with an intensely felt sense of decline and nostalgia.'<sup>62</sup> But though Smith praises the warrior-savage for his stoicism, that 'best school of heroes and patriots', this reflects the way his main thesis draws on Stoic philosophy to argue, as John Mullan puts it, 'that feeling be regulated and chastened', 'order[ed]' rather than 'celebrated'.<sup>63</sup> After all, in commending the warrior-savage's self-discipline, Smith pointedly does not praise his martial skills. Smith notes, for example, that the 'savage' is so self-disciplined as to be able to control pleasure as well as pain: he shows no preference in choice of a wife, as 'the weakness of love, which is so much indulged in ages of humanity and politeness, is regarded among savages as the most unpardonable effeminacy'. It is significant that Smith admires a society in which unrestrained sexual desire is considered a 'most indecent and unmanly sensuality', for with this Smith praises the warrior-savage for practising the kind of self-discipline that serves as the moral basis for modern politeness.<sup>64</sup>

As enthusiastic as Smith is about the warrior-savage's self-restraint, though, he is not offered as a model for modern man. Smith's *Theory* is not concerned principally with establishing a narrative of progress, but its encounter with the warrior-savage contributes to the text's underlying commitment to both proto-constructionism and the modern moment. Smith's 'savage' is not essentially and innately inclined to violence; rather, he is shaped by living in 'continual danger' which 'habituate[s] him to every sort of distress, and teach[es] him to give way to none of the passions which that distress is apt to excite.' As a result, the warrior-savage illustrates that people are formed by their circumstances – that 'the stile of manners which takes place in any nation ... [is] that which is most suitable to its situation' – but as these circumstances change, so societies advance.<sup>65</sup> In praising the warrior-savage for his self-discipline, then, Smith

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., p. 399.

<sup>62</sup> Maureen Harkin, 'Adam Smith's Missing History: Primitives, Progress, and Problems of Genre', *ELH*, 72.2 (2005), 429–51 (at p. 443).

<sup>63</sup> Smith, *Moral Sentiments*, p. 136; John Mullan, *Sentiment and Sociability: The Language of Feeling in the Eighteenth Century* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), p. 56.

<sup>64</sup> Smith, *Moral Sentiments*, p. 400.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., pp. 398, 409.

moves beyond what Sankar Muthu identifies as the earliest default narrative of savagery as the 'state of nature', but Smith's advance is limited, for his willingness to see the warrior-savage as complex, as a product of circumstances rather than nature, permits him to position the warrior-savage within a unilinear narrative of progress that ends with polite civility.<sup>66</sup> Smith acknowledges that 'the delicate sensibility required in civilized nations sometimes destroys the masculine firmness of the character', and that as a result the modern man might not be as much a master of himself as the stoic warrior-savage: 'among civilized nations, the virtues which are founded upon humanity, are more cultivated than those which are founded upon self-denial and the command of the passions. Among rude and barbarous nations, it is quite otherwise.'<sup>67</sup> However, he seems not to conceive of this, as a civic critic might, as a loss, for this feminized man is also shaped by circumstances and so is more suited to the modern world. Ultimately, Smith concludes, the 'heroic and unconquerable firmness which the custom and education of [the warrior-savage's] country demand of every savage, is not required of those who are brought up to live in civil and civilized societies.'<sup>68</sup>

When Ferguson turns to the relationship between the warrior-savage and civilized society, he produces quite the opposite conclusion.<sup>69</sup> In the early pages of his *Essay*, Ferguson lays down a challenge to the Enlightenment narrative of progress by questioning whether 'the proper state of his nature ... is not a condition from which mankind are for ever removed, but one to which they may now attain.'<sup>70</sup> Characteristically, Ferguson initially balances his argument by acknowledging there are some who have characterized early societies as lesser because more violent: '[they] have made the state of nature to consist in perpetual wars, ... where the presence of a fellow-creature was the signal of a battle.'<sup>71</sup> He subsequently identifies the propensity for violence as one of the failings of rude nations: 'though they are patient of hardship and fatigue, though they are addicted to war ... yet, in the course of a continued struggle, always yield to the superior arts, and the discipline of more civilized nations.'<sup>72</sup> However, Ferguson is unwilling

<sup>66</sup> Sankar Muthu, *Enlightenment Against Empire* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press), pp. 11–71.

<sup>67</sup> Smith, *Moral Sentiments*, pp. 408–9, 397.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 403.

<sup>69</sup> Here, I disagree with Tim Fulford's account of the similarity between Smith and Ferguson. See *Romantic Indians: Native Americans, British Literature, and Transatlantic Culture 1756–1830* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), pp. 41–6.

<sup>70</sup> Ferguson, *Civil Society*, p. 14.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 3.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 139.

to condemn the sentiments that prompt defensive violence: 'they are sentiments of generosity and self-denial that animate the warrior in defence of his country; and they are dispositions most favourable to mankind, that become the principles of apparent hostility to men.'<sup>73</sup>

Early man, Ferguson argues, loved and hated with equal vehemence, and it was this natural inclination to form friendships that also caused him to make enemies:

Every tribe of warlike barbarians ... entertain among themselves the strongest sentiments of affection and honour, while they carry to the rest of mankind the aspect of banditti and robbers ... [O]ur sense of humanity, our regard to the rights of nations, our admiration of civil wisdom and justice, even our effeminacy itself, make us turn away with contempt, or with horror, from a scene which exhibits so few of our good qualities, and which serve so much to reproach our weakness.<sup>74</sup>

Here, Ferguson makes plain that those who seem to be merely 'barbarians' remind civilized societies that sentiment precedes violence, and thus so-called savage violence demonstrates the strength of fellow-feeling between fellow creatures. As a result, Ferguson's warrior-savage is fundamentally the same as the anti-standing army argument's civic citizen-soldier, since both take up arms for the love of their nation, and the 'humanity' that turns away is really that of a modernity that has degenerated into 'effeminacy' and 'weakness', for in the later stages of his argument, Ferguson firmly juxtaposes 'old' savage and modern civilized society, to the detriment of the latter:

If the savage has not received our instructions, he is likewise unacquainted with our vices. He knows no superior, and cannot be servile; he knows no distinctions of fortune, and cannot be envious; he acts from his talents in the highest station which human society can offer, that of the counsellor, and the soldier of his country. Toward forming his sentiments, he knows all that the heart requires to be known; he can distinguish the friend whom he loves, and the public interest which awakens his zeal.<sup>75</sup>

So invested is Ferguson in the warrior-savage as a model man of feeling, he asks the modern man to recognize his past savage self as the superior man. Ferguson concedes that modern man has managed to 'obviate the casual abuses of passion' which once resulted from the closeness of feeling and violence, and he maintains that modern man should only be spurred

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., p. 34.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid., p. 232.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid., p. 278.

into action by love for his fellows rather than hatred of his enemy, that is, defence not attack. However, for Ferguson, the savage's martial spirit reminds the polite and commercial man that 'if the individual, not called to unite with his country, be left to pursue his private advantage; we may find him become effeminate, mercenary, and sensual.'<sup>76</sup> Whereas Smith indicates that savagery is one in a sequence of stages, Ferguson disrupts the linear narrative of progress by emphasizing the synchronicity of so-called savagery and modern civility in the contemporary moment: 'it is in their present condition, that we are to behold, as in a mirrour, the features of our own progenitors.' If Smith argues that modern man need only internalize the impartial spectator in order to appear at his best, Ferguson asserts that modern man would be improved by a (re)turn to the virtues of savagery. Ferguson turns to the 'wild American' to substantiate his point that modern man has sacrificed his essential nature for polite performance, for 'men who live in the simplest condition ... have not learned to affect what they do not actually feel.'<sup>77</sup> Like West's American Indian, Ferguson's warrior-savage is a model for the kind of militarism, and masculinity, in which the modern polite man is no longer interested, but to which he can and ought to return. For 'what should distinguish a German or a Briton, in the habits of his mind or his body, in his manners or apprehensions, from an American, who, like him, with his bow and his dart, is left to traverse the forest; and in a like severe or variable climate, is obliged to subsist by the chase?'<sup>78</sup>

Though the culture of sensibility could, as Smith's *Theory* shows, accommodate the celebration of progress and with it the feminization of masculinity, it was also the case that advocates for sensibility could seize on the apparently timeless 'nature' of feeling to denounce proto-constructionist understandings of masculinity. For Ferguson and, slightly later, West, the warrior-savage's capacity for feeling confirms that he is someone for whom civil society ought to have more regard, for in recognizing (dis)similarity, the modern man will see how far he has declined rather than progressed. The same argument is made in a novel published in the year West exhibited *The Death of Wolfe*: Henry Mackenzie's *The Man of Feeling* (1771). Like Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto*, the novel purports to be a 'found' text, though in this case the novel comprises a series of fragments contained by a frame

<sup>76</sup> Ibid., pp. 138, 374.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid., pp. 118, 25, 26.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid., p. 118.

narrative which explains how the original manuscript came to be so damaged. As episodic as it is, though, it is possible to discern a distinctly civic narrative: the protagonist, Harley, travels to London, the centre of the corrupt, duplicitous metropolitan world, in order to improve his fortunes, but he succeeds in failing and then returns to a place in which virtue is, or rather ought to be, possible. In other words, the text seems concerned primarily with the notion of recovering that which is old and original, that which, like the fictional original manuscript, is almost, but not quite lost.

As a young man in the 1760s, Mackenzie had travelled to London to finish his studies, but after returning to Edinburgh – a move he described as a retreat from the pursuit of ‘rank and wealth’ – he settled into the town as a freemason and member of various clubs including the Mirror Club, which supported his exercises in periodical publication: *The Mirror* (1779) and *The Lounger* (1785–7).<sup>79</sup> For Julie Ellison, the clubbable Mackenzie can easily be aligned with other Scottish Enlightenment intellectuals including Hume and Smith, who, she believes, ‘produce[d] the fictional paradigm of tenderhearted manhood.’<sup>80</sup> However, Maureen Harkin has forwarded the argument that *The Man of Feeling* contains numerous ‘indictments of contemporary society’ and she places Mackenzie in ‘an older conservative-reactionary tradition’, nearer to Tobias Smollett than to Hume and his contemporaries.<sup>81</sup> One such indictment of modernity is evident in the text’s suspicion of the modern, professionalized military man. The modern military man first appears in absentia: early in the text Mackenzie insinuates that the nation’s standing soldiers might be less than virtuous when he notes that the beggar’s dog had been stolen ‘from the serjeant of a marching regiment (and by the way he can steal too upon occasion.)’<sup>82</sup> This implication is made into an accusation as the text builds to the emotional climax of Harley’s visit to London: the rescue of the fallen woman, Emily Atkins. Emily’s downfall began with the death of her mother, but Atkins’ inadequacies as a father are intimately connected to his attachment to the army, as his pride in ‘the honour of a soldier’, leads to his failure to instil within his daughter conventional moral and

<sup>79</sup> Mackenzie quoted in Richard B. Sher, *The Enlightenment and the Book: Scottish Authors and their Publishers in Eighteenth-Century Britain, Ireland and America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006), p. 120.

<sup>80</sup> Julie Ellison, *Cato’s Tears and the Making of Anglo-American Emotion* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), p. 12.

<sup>81</sup> Maureen Harkin, ‘Mackenzie’s Man of Feeling: Embalming Sensibility’, *ELH*, 61.2 (1994), 317–40 (at pp. 332, 325).

<sup>82</sup> Henry Mackenzie, *The Man of Feeling*, ed. by Stephen Bending and Stephen Bygrave (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 18.

religious principles.<sup>83</sup> And yet, the fact that Atkins has not progressed through the ranks means that he has not been entirely corrupted by his professional service. Thus, when Atkins, who has searched for Emily since her disastrous elopement, arrives at her shabby lodgings, the father and daughter are redeemed together. Atkins' intention to avenge his daughter evaporates at the sight of her: 'his lip quivered, his cheek grew pale! his eyes lost the lightening of their fury! ... He laid his left hand on his heart – the sword dropped from his right – he burst into tears.'<sup>84</sup> Here, Atkins is overtaken by his innate capacity for feeling, made manifest in quivering, blanching, and, finally, weeping, such that he exchanges the modern professional soldier for the 'natural' because emotional father.

Of course, Atkins' transition from a proud soldier to a feeling father should not be read as a criticism of all militarism. When Atkins drops the sword with which he intends to avenge his daughter's destroyer and instead weeps, the text moves from criticizing the modern military man to sentimentalizing the old hero. Harley's final disappointment in London comes when he hears that the piece of land that he tried but failed to secure has not been presented to a worthy recipient, such as 'some war-worn officer, who like poor Atkins had been neglected from reasons which merited the highest advancement; whose honour could not stoop to solicit the preferment he deserved; perhaps with a family...' <sup>85</sup> The virtue of that which is 'old' is reaffirmed at the pivotal point in the novel. A passenger in the stagecoach that is carrying Harley back to the country, a young military officer, manipulates the seating arrangements, securing a seat next to one of the ladies by accusing an older man of trying to do likewise: "So, my old boy", said he, "I find you have still some youthful blood about you." The young officer maintains a conversation with the lady, 'by a variety of oaths, a sort of phraseology in which he seemed extremely versant', and her husband, a grocer, then joins them in making fun of the older gentleman passenger, leading Harley to reprove them: 'Harley looked sternly on the grocer: "You are come, Sir", said he, "to those years when you might have learned some reverence for age: as for this young man, who has so lately escaped from the nursery, he may be allowed to divert himself." "Dam'-me, Sir", said the officer, "do you call me young?"' <sup>86</sup> Here, the once bashful and easily duped Harley shames the 'young' officer,

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 42.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 50.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 56.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 58–9.



and the officer's attempt to assert his maturity only further enhances the value of that which is authentically old.

While Atkins represents the modern military man, albeit one who, unlike the young officer in the stagecoach, has not been irredeemably sullied by the machinery of modern war, the text introduces 'old Edwards', upon whom Harley happens because they are returning to the same village, as the old hero. Edwards is not a professional soldier: he had been forced to volunteer for service in order to spare his son, who, having angered the local Justice of the Peace, had been targeted by an army press-gang. Whereas Atkins must drop his military pride so as to reconnect with his child, Edwards had turned soldier for sentimental reasons and so his militarism is proof of his sensibility. Harley encounters Edwards asleep on the ground, like 'one of those figures which Salvator [Rosa] would have drawn; nor was the surrounding scenery unlike the wildness of that painter's backgrounds ... A rock, with some dangling wild flowers, juttied out above where the soldier lay.'<sup>87</sup> Mackenzie's choice of artist is significant here. In *Discourses*, Joshua Reynolds rather cautiously praises Rosa's 'peculiar cast of nature, which though void of all grace, elegance, and simplicity, though it has nothing of that elevation and dignity which belongs to the grand style, yet, has that sort of dignity which belongs to savage and uncultivated nature.'<sup>88</sup> With his reference to Rosa, Mackenzie presents Edwards as one at ease with that which is 'savage and uncultivated': he is absorbed by the landscape, the rock and wild flowers guard and decorate the soldier's body and a 'twisted branch' shades the face which bears 'marks of manly comeliness'. Harley is drawn to this 'natural' figure by instinct: he hails the old man in a fit of 'romantic enthusiasm' and offers to carry his heavy knapsack, deducing that, "'you seem to have served your country, Sir, to have served it hardly too; 'tis a character I have the highest esteem for.'"<sup>89</sup> Edwards responds with tears of gratitude, a language both men understand.

If Mackenzie's old Edwards' recumbent pose seems similar to that of West's dying Wolfe, it is because he serves the novel as a model of old heroism, and like West's *Wolfe*, Mackenzie secures the new old hero by establishing a bond between him and a 'savage' other. In conversation with Harley, Edwards reveals that the army had taken him to India, where an 'old Indian' who had been taken prisoner engages his sympathy:

"Oh! Mr. Harley, had you seen him, as I did, with his hands bound behind him, suffering in silence, while the big drops trickled down his shrivelled

<sup>87</sup> Ibid., p. 64.

<sup>88</sup> Joshua Reynolds, *Discourses*, ed. by Pat Rogers (London: Penguin, 1992), pp. 144–5.

<sup>89</sup> Mackenzie, *The Man of Feeling*, pp. 64, 65.

cheeks, and wet his grey beard, which some of the inhuman soldiers plucked in scorn. I could not bear it, I could not for my soul."<sup>90</sup>

Unlike Smith's warrior-savage, whose ability to suffer in silence is evidence of his proto-polite self-discipline, Mackenzie's tearful old Indian displays what Ferguson claims is the essential human capacity for sentiment. Edwards' fellow-feeling for his fellow human forces him to act, and he incurs military punishment for freeing the captive. The text does not condemn Edwards for this; on the contrary, the treatment of the old Indian and old Edwards indicates that the modern army – a tyrannical institution, dedicated to the commercial nation's imperial ambition – little deserves Edwards' loyalty. Though the figure of the American Indian was closely associated in the mid- to-late eighteenth century with topical stories of 'savage' violence, this figure could also, as Ian Haywood argues, be forwarded as a victim of British imperialism.<sup>91</sup> Whereas Ferguson recommends that modern man look at the so-called savage as though looking in a mirror, Mackenzie's novel stages such an encounter between Edwards and the old Indian and both men immediately recognize that they are fellows in 'natural' feeling and in their powerlessness against Britain's modern military machine. For Ferguson, the expansion of the British Empire is a matter of decline and fall: he frequently refers to the collapse of the Roman Empire to illustrate that 'the admiration of boundless dominion is a ruinous error'.<sup>92</sup> The legacy of seventeenth-century civic-republicanism is evident in his argument that empires erode the liberty of the people because boundlessness discourages peoples from marshalling their military capacity for their collective interests. When Mackenzie's 'Man of Feeling' speaks of 'what he does not understand', that is, of Britain's imperial expansion in India, he likewise condemns the desire for conquest and domination. For Harley, the desire for empire forces an army of old Edwardses abroad to be officered by men for whom "the fame of conquest, barbarous as that motive is, is but a secondary consideration: [for] there are certain stations in wealth to which the warriors of the East aspire." It falls to Edwards to remind Harley that he ought to castigate only militarism motivated by greed:

"For you know, Sir, that it is not the fashion now, as it was in former times, that I have read of in books, when your great generals died so poor, that

<sup>90</sup> Ibid., p.70.

<sup>91</sup> Ian Haywood, *Bloody Romanticism: Spectacular Violence and the Politics of Representation, 1776–1832* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), pp. 141–7.

<sup>92</sup> Ferguson, *Civil Society*, p. 88.

they did not leave wherewithal to buy them a coffin; and people thought the better of their memories for it: for if they did so now-a-days, I question if any body, except yourself, and some few like you, would thank them.”<sup>93</sup>

Here, the text’s civic ideology is fully apparent, for Mackenzie separates the modern military men who serve only for their own personal gain, men like Robert Clive and Warren Hastings, from the virtuous old soldiers who, like the great generals of former times, serve as better models for modern men.

Though Mackenzie offers the encounter between old Edwards and the old Indian as an episode that reveals the connection between them, the text only takes this point of connection so far. Julie Ellison has examined the tendency for American war veterans and slaves to be coupled as ‘others’ in Anglo-American sentimental fiction; in Mackenzie’s text the veteran and the prisoner become the virtuous ‘others’ to the corrupt modern British ‘self’.<sup>94</sup> Having liberated the old Indian, Edwards is dismissed from the army and left to make his own way home. This allows for an awkwardly coincidental reunion in which their roles are reversed, as the old Indian assists Edwards in recognition of his debt to him, but also of their common humanity: “You are an Englishman”, said [the old Indian], “but the Great Spirit has given you an Indian heart.”<sup>95</sup> However, the shift from North America to India, from warrior-savage to military prisoner, reveals something of the conceptual knottiness of the ties that bind the politics of old heroism to the culture of sensibility. According to Muthu, representations of the ‘noble savage’ were crucial in facilitating the humanitarianism of the antislavery movement, but they struggled to fully break away from ‘dehumanizing exoticism’.<sup>96</sup> Markman Ellis has charted the role of the sentimental novel in the development of a ‘new humanitarian sensibility’ and he concludes that, as in the case of Mackenzie’s treatment of slavery in his novel *Julia de Roubigné* (1777), such writing stopped short of any ‘radical’ agenda.<sup>97</sup> This point stands for *The Man of Feeling* also, for when Mackenzie sentimentalizes the fellow-feeling between Edwards and the old Indian he rejects new commercial/imperial identities and relationships, but not traditional hierarchies. Having replaced the American Indian of Ferguson and West’s imaginations with a ‘safer’ figure – a prisoner of war,

<sup>93</sup> Mackenzie, *The Man of Feeling*, p. 77.

<sup>94</sup> Ellison, *Cato’s Tears*, pp. 151–2.

<sup>95</sup> Mackenzie, *The Man of Feeling*, p. 70.

<sup>96</sup> Muthu, *Enlightenment Against Empire*, p. 12.

<sup>97</sup> Markman Ellis, *The Politics of Sensibility: Race, Gender and Commerce in the Sentimental Novel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 49, 117.

not a warrior with weapons – Mackenzie ensures that Edwards remains the principal model for old heroism. After all, the chapter merely pauses for Edwards to recall his encounter with the old Indian and then moves on to focus on Edwards' relationship with Harley. Soon after introducing himself to Edwards, Harley, whose early life has been marred by an absent father, embraces the old man with familial tenderness: "Edwards", said he, "let me hold thee to my bosom; let me imprint the virtue of thy sufferings on my soul. Come, my honoured veteran! let me endeavour to soften the last days of a life worn out in the service of humanity: call me also thy son, and let me cherish thee as a father."<sup>98</sup> Old Edwards is as much in need of a son as Harley is in need of a father. Having been left to work the land on his own, Edwards' son had been unable to produce enough to pay the rent, leading to his death and the abandonment of his children. Once Harley has hailed Edwards as a father, then, the text begins to piece together a traditional family structure, for as Edwards' new son Harley bridges the gap between Edwards and his grandchildren. Of course, the sentimental bond between Harley and the old veteran sweetens the narrative, but does not disguise how strongly, as Barbara Benedict states, it 'advocates a reform of manners that yet reinscribes the necessity of social control.'<sup>99</sup> The urgency of the text's underlying patriarchal agenda is fully disclosed when Harley provides the Edwardses with a home on his land, for this muddles Harley's place in the family order so as to install Harley as an exemplarily benevolent land-owner.<sup>100</sup>

As Lyn Festa observes, though sentimental literature 'upholds a common identity' for humanity, the 'vagrant affect' which wanders in this borderless space threatens a 'menacing usurpation of the self.'<sup>101</sup> In its concluding stages, Mackenzie's novel works to reimpose traditional borders. As important as the warmth of natural feeling is between old Edwards and the old Indian, the text concludes with fragments which ensure that male emotion is channelled towards normatively masculine ends. As Janet Todd has shown, the culture of sensibility 'stressed those qualities considered

<sup>98</sup> Mackenzie, *The Man of Feeling*, p. 71.

<sup>99</sup> Barbara M. Benedict, *Framing Feeling: Sentiment and Style in English Prose Fiction, 1745–1800* (New York: AMS Press, 1994), p. 117.

<sup>100</sup> Here, I concur with Robert Markley's argument that Mackenzie's novel construes sensibility as a form of aristocratic noblesse oblige which maintains the social hierarchy. See Robert Markley, 'Sentimentality as Performance: Shaftesbury, Sterne, and the Theatrics of Virtue' in *The New Eighteenth Century*, ed. by Felicity Nussbaum and Laura Brown (New York: Methuen, 1987), pp. 210–30.

<sup>101</sup> Lynn Festa, *Sentimental Figures of Empire in Eighteenth-Century Britain and France* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006), pp. 4, 6.

feminine in the sexual psychology of the time', and so by the second half of the century 'excessive emotion', to borrow Adele Pinch's key term, was increasingly held to be an index of effeminacy.<sup>102</sup> Although Harley has undergone a civic journey and, as 'son' and landowner, become suitably patriarchal and patrician, his sensitivity is such that he is unable to reveal his affection for the local paragon of female modesty, Miss Walton, and so dies without becoming a husband and father. Harley's impotence does not render the novel likewise, of course. Just as the old Indian does not replace old Edwards as the model for old heroism, so Harley's romantic failure ensures that the younger man does not replace the old hero as the ideal 'man of feeling'. Though Edwards plays little part in the final stages of the narrative, he remains the model father, a conclusion that encapsulates the text's call for a return to the 'natural' feelings that underpin the 'natural' social order.

If the capaciousness of the culture of sensibility was such that both the modern professional military man and the old hero could be forwarded as model men of feeling, the presence of the 'warrior-savage' in the mid-century culture of sensibility reveals much about the limitations of both arguments. Though Smith's argument that sympathy is a form of self-discipline contains within it the proto-constructionist argument that character – whether that of the warrior-savage or the modern military man – is cultural rather than essential, any progressive energy generated by these ideas is restricted by his adherence to a narrative of progress from rude savagery to modern polite civility. In contrast, Ferguson's *Essay* and Mackenzie's novel understand sentiment to be an essential human attribute that knows no difference between an old Indian and an old Edwards, but these texts also contain deeply essentialist commitments. As pointed as Mackenzie's criticism of the modern British soldier and modern British imperialism is, the celebration of fellow-feeling does little to disrupt conservative race, class, and, crucially, gender hierarchies.

<sup>102</sup> Todd, *Sensibility*, p. 110; Adele Pinch, *Strange Fits of Passion: Epistemologies of Emotion, Hume to Austen* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1996).